



Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary:

At the 78th meeting of the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS (PACHA) that took place in Charleston, West Virginia on September 20, 2023, PACHA voted unanimously to send this letter to you requesting your immediate and urgent attention to two important matters concerning the U.S. global and domestic commitment to HIV/AIDS.

We are deeply concerned that current authorization of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) is due to expire on September 30, 2023, and that Congress has not acted to reauthorize this critical piece of legislation that provides foundational support for ending the global HIV epidemic. Created by President George W. Bush in 2003 and having enjoyed strong bipartisan support in Congress for 20 years, PEPFAR is highly regarded as America's greatest contribution to global public health having saved 25 million lives and prevented 5.5 million babies from being born with HIV. Today, PEPFAR funding supports HIV prevention, treatment and care in 50 countries. Its [FY 2023 funding](#) is \$6.9 billion, with approximately \$4.9 billion for bilateral HIV efforts and \$2 billion for U.S. contributions to the [Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria](#).¹

We urge you to use your influence as Secretary to support reauthorization of PEPFAR, and that you direct the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Legislative Affairs to work in collaboration with the White House Office of National AIDS Policy (ONAP), and the Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator to advance Congressional reauthorization of PEPFAR, and that reauthorization include no riders creating additional restrictions on programs supported by PEPFAR beyond current law, particularly those that would serve to limit support for sexual and reproductive health services and the human rights of LGBTQ populations. We urge further that they work to support appropriation of funding for PEPFAR at current or higher levels when a FY24 budget is passed.

¹ <https://www.kff.org/policy-watch/pepfar-reauthorization-2023-key-issues/#:~:text=This%20year%2C%20Congress%20will%20consider,would%20be%20PEPFAR's%20fourth%20reauth,orization.>


We are deeply concerned also, that the U.S. House of Representatives is proposing drastic cuts to the domestic federal HIV portfolio. The House Labor and Health and Human Services, Education (LHHS) appropriations subcommittee has proposed removing \$767M in HIV funding for fiscal year 2024, including funding for the Ending the HIV Epidemic initiative (EHE). The EHE initiative, created by President Trump in 2019, has also garnered bipartisan support, but its demise will severely limit any progress toward ending the HIV epidemic in the U.S. and the goals stated in our National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS). We are especially concerned that the proposed cuts include drastic reductions in the Minority AIDS Initiative (MAI). Yet the latest data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) show that significant progress is being made in our country. New HIV infections were 12% lower in 2021 than in 2017, with a 34% decrease in new infections among youth ages 13-24.² In addition, by 2021, lifesaving HIV viral suppression rates have risen to 66% among people living with HIV in the U.S.³

PACHA urges you to use your influence as Secretary to address these drastic cuts to the federal domestic HIV portfolio, and that you direct the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Legislative affairs to work in collaboration with the White House Office of National AIDS Policy (ONAP), and the departments and agencies in the federal interagency working group on HIV to urge Congressional support for maintaining current funding levels for the federal HIV portfolio, and that they work to advance the original FY2024 budget requested by President Biden for addressing the U.S. HIV epidemic. Further, we request that you, your HHS Office on Legislative Affairs, and the federal interagency working group on HIV work to prevent any riders to HIV funding that would restrict sexual and reproductive health programs supported by federal HIV funds or that would limit rights and access to health care for LGBTQ people.

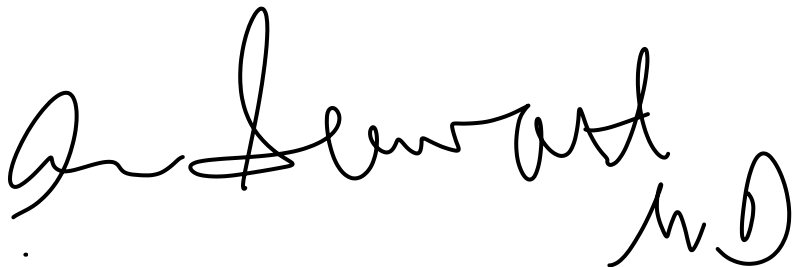
Our global and domestic progress must not be stopped by political forces in Congress. We urge your immediate attention to help address these grave concerns of PACHA and our constituents.

Thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,



John Sapero
PACHA Co-chair Pro Tem



Ada Stewart, RPh, MD, FAAFP, AAHIVS, HMDC
PACHA Co-chair Pro Tem

² <https://www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/newsroom/hiv-resources.html>

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/library/reports/hiv-surveillance/vol-28-no-4/index.html>